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## THE HUMAN SECURITY MACHINE: KANT'S SAFETY NET AND THE ESCAPE VELOCITY OF THE 'DARK POWER OF WILL, DESIRE, AND INTELLIGENCE'

PHILOFICTION DARKNESS, KANT, POWER, WILL

the most important philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, seems to have: constructed his grand philosophical design, an architecture of concepts and arguments, to sustain and safeguard the reliability of the world, the certainty of knowledge, and the stability of experience. Kant's philosophy protects the reasonable individual from his mad counterpart. His system guards modern man from thoughts of bottomless skepticism, experiences of unfathomable depths, and the seductions of animal sensuality."

1 of 10 9/28/2024, 12:15 PM -Wouter Kusters. A Philosophy of Madness

"Kant's theory of the spontaneous inventiveness of genius presents the same figure as that of pathological animality, the violent, feral urge towards becoming-inferior that must be suppressed by practical philosophy: an impersonal, energetic unconscious emerges as the as-yet unacknowledged problematic of Occidental philosophy. Non-agentic, lacking the intentional intelligibility of Kant's 'will', and with no regard for architectonic order, this transcendental unconscious is an insurgent field of forces for whose cunning - as Nietzsche would discover - even 'reason' itself is but an instrument. Anticipating the psychoanalytical conception of 'desire', Schopenhauer and Nietzsche consummate the collapse of intentional transparency into the opacity of a contingent and unknown 'will', a 'purposiveness without purpose' whose unmasterable irruptions are in fact dissipations pathological by definition - of energy excessive to that required for (absorbed by) the 'work' of being human. At once underlying and overflowing the 'torture chamber of organic specificity', or 'Human Security System', this inundation creates 'useless' new labyrinths, unemployable new fictions that exceed any attempt to systematise knowledge or culture."

"Capital is machinic (non-instrumental) globalization-miniaturization scaling dilation: an automatizing nihilist vortex, neutralizing all values through commensuration to digitized commerce, and driving a migration from despotic command to cyber-sensitive control: from status and meaning to money and information. Its function and formation are indissociable, comprising a teleonomy."

"The future is closer than it used to be, closer than it was last week, but postmodernity remains an epoch of undead power: it's all over yet it carries on. Monopod SF teleonomy superfreezes concentrated economic value at absolute zero inflation, ICE ('intrusion countermeasure electronics'). Protecting its data against unauthorized access and entropic deterioration, as it tends toward its absolute immanent limit. V(amp)iro finance: parthenogenesis."

-Nick Land, Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987 - 2007. Urbanomic/Sequence Press.

Rereading Land in the light of Kusters Philosophy of Madness is enlightening. Land pushed into the psychotic matrix of all possibilities, a Rimbaud of anti-philosophical destruction and "derangement of the senses" leaping beyond the Human Security Regime and into the dark hinterlands of our futural horrors. Couched in Nineties Cyberpunk tropes his speculative mad Deleuzianism turns us toward the full-blown insanity of our Cultural Insanity. Most of our daylight culture is an architecture of Defense Systems against the incursion of the 'Will' - a deeply conservative stance against the freedom and power of unbound nihil (Brassier). That the civilizations of the world in Russia, China, India, Europe, and the U.S. are entering the last stages of this mad turn we now know. That they are doing everything possible to stave off the coming psychotic break from their Human Security Regimes is also apparent. One does not need to quote any social philosopher to know we are entering the labyrinths of an 'absolute immanent limit' to the World-System that has held humanity together for the past couple hundred years or so. Even during that era wars and destruction ran rampant as these systems began to shore up their deep myths both secular and religious against the ultimate abyss

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confronting them.

Nick Land was able to push into this dark territory with his eyes wide open. Even as those who sought to discredit him, to castigate his ultra-right-wing politics, the underlying truths he revealed worked outside all politics whatsoever. Most saw his thought as the ravings of a complete lunatic. So be it. Yet, he will not go away. His thought is of a 'truth' that most are not willing to accept, much less admit into their staid and protected Human Security Regime.

Even as I deplore his politics, I acknowledge his darker truths which open the doors onto our contemporary predicament in ways that no philosopher alive today comprehends or even attempts to understand much less speak and address. Most philosophers and pundits of the academy are still infatuated with the Idealisms of yesterday, seeking to defend the Human Security Regime against all incursions from the Outside. I have not seen one thinker willing to explore the darker futural abyss opening its bestial claims on us. They fear it and seek to deny it. Self-deception and deceit litter the landscape of philosophy today. These so-called thinkers are bound to a dead world of thought.

Where is the thinker alive who is willing to confront the futural madness beyond the death worlds of our current malaise? Will they arise from our children? Is this only a dream that one will come as Peter Wessel Zappfe ironically puts it:

"But as he stands before imminent death, he grasps its nature also, and the cosmic import of the step to come. His creative imagination constructs new, fearful prospects behind the curtain of death, and he sees that even there is no sanctuary found. And now he can discern the outline of his biologicocosmic terms: He is the universe's helpless captive, kept to fall into nameless possibilities."

—The Last Messiah

Quentin Meillasoux asks a pertinent question in his: "the guiding question of extro-science fiction is: what should a world be, what should a world resemble, so that it is in principle inaccessible to a scientific knowledge, so that it cannot be established as the object of a natural science."1 Andrew C. Wenaus in his commentary on this suggests,

"Meillassoux suggests that we can only know something because we have seen it repeatedly happen in the past. But, this is not necessarily the case: experience does not equal reality. He radicalizes this in ways that are not only metaphysical but in ways that destabilize the very assumptions of science as a methodology of knowledge. Thinking needs avenues to consider that reality is plastic, hyper-chaotic, and ever-changing in fundamental ways; this thinking requires a poiesis that resists being categorized by scientific knowledge. What is a kind of fiction that resists co-option by the apparatus and, as a result, allots us paratactic thought alongside the apparatus as empathetic subjects? Extro-science fiction is already here in experimental literature, print and avant-garde literature, slipstream, surrealism, electronic literature, and the literature of exclusion. Literature is poiesis, and the unthinkable thought offers asymptotic convergences for the future of narrating the general intellect both encountering and countering the apparatus. As an extro-science fiction, the literature of exclusion thinks in ways that prepare us for uncertain futures by celebrating potentialities, virtualities, and contingencies, and by always

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intensifying the threshold of unknowability in narrative."2

Future oriented as a form of 'psychotic praxis' as Wouter Kusters suggests is the path many are taking: "my own philosophical attitude led to psychotic praxis, and I argue that this is a more common occurrence; that is, a certain kind of consistent philosophizing may very well result in confusion, paradoxes, unworldy insights, and circular frozenness that is reminiscent of madness— which in fact is what happened to quite a few philosophers who are far from unimportant, such as Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Georg Cantor. I give examples of this, from myself and others, but I also demonstrate it by letting the controlled language of philosophical observation and reflection slowly but surely shift toward its objectthat is, madness— the further one reads into the book. There was yet another kind of reader who was less interested in psychiatry or mental health issues as such. This reader was primarily interested in the book for its perspective on philosophy as a dangerous, possibly maddening activity in which the stakes are, and should be, set high. In a way, then, not only does the book alleviate psychosis and emancipate the psychotic person from medical classifications, but it also emancipates the philosopher from the clinical academic context of narrow textbook study and frees him or her to engage in real-life praxis, philosophy in vivo, which is accessible to everyone - not least of all the madman. In fact, as a third thematic line in this book, I argue that psychosis— in spite of all its sufferings and digressions— is best understood as the desire for infinity and absolute freedom, which it shares with so many philosophies."3

This is where Nick Land's entry into 'psychotic praxis' is still viable and welcome. His desire for infinity or as he terms it letting the "Outside in" typifies the way of thought and being in a world where the Human Security Regime has broken down into civilizational schizophrenia. As Robin Makay and Ray Brassier say in their forward to Land's essays: "Land's incisive assessment of the machinic reality of a schizo-capitalism currently in the process of penetrating and colonizing the innermost recesses of human subjectivity exposes the fatally anachronistic character of the metaphysical conception of human agency upon which 'revolutionary' thought continues to rely. The anachronistic character of left voluntarism is nowhere more apparent than in its resort to a negative theology of perpetually deferred 'hope', mordantly poring over its own reiterated depredation. Worse still is the complacent sanctimony of those 'critical' theorists who concede that the prospect of revolutionary transformation is not only unattainable but undesirable (given its dangerously 'totalitarian' propensities), but who remain content to pursue a career in critique, safely insulated from the risks of political praxis. The challenge of Land's work cannot be circumvented by construing the moral dismay it (often deliberately) provokes as proof of its erroneous nature, or by exploiting the inadequacies in Land's positive construction as an excuse to evade the corrosive critical implications of his thought. Nor can it be concluded that this alternative philosophical path cannot be further explored."4

At our moment those who seek to bolster up the academy, seek to stay safely within the Human Security Regime are our enemies. Their systems seek not to open our minds but rather to close them in a timeless void of secular adaptation and passivity, a world of closure where the late Mark Fisher so brilliantly once stated:

While 20th-century experimental culture was seized by a recombinatorial delirium, which

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made it feel as if newness was infinitely available, the 21st century is oppressed by a crushing sense of finitude and exhaustion. It doesn't feel like the future. ... The feeling of belatedness, of living after the gold rush, is as omnipresent as it is disavowed. Compare the fallow terrain of the current moment with the fecundity of previous periods and you will quickly be accused of 'nostalgia'.5

Camille Paglia in her work brings to a pitch much of our current malaise suggesting that our era of decadence and decline is at heart its receding into pure abstraction: "whenever sexual freedom is sought or achieved, sadomasochism will not be far behind. Romanticism always turns into decadence. Nature is a hard taskmaster. It is the hammer and the anvil, crushing individuality. Perfect freedom would be to die by earth, air, water, and fire." Strangely Kusters at the end of his philosophical peregrinations offers up this quadratic assemble of "earth, air, water, and fire" as the goal of 'psychotic praxis', the making of a Crystal World - a fourfold structure:

"The fourfold form of the crystal can be interpreted in different ways. The interpretation that is most deeply embedded in our being is the division of earth, air, water, and fire, discovered by early Greek philosophers such as Empedocles and Pythagoras. Diogenes Laërtius wrote this about Pythagoras's teaching: "The first principle of all things is the monad; arising from the monad, the indeterminate dyad serves as the substrate of the monad, which is cause. From the monad and the indeterminate dyad arise numbers; from numbers, points; from points, lines; from lines, plane figures; from plane figures, solid figures; from solid figures, perceptible bodies, of which there are four elements: fire, water, earth, and air. These elements interact and change completely into one another, and from them arises a universe animate, intelligent, and spherical, with the earth (which is also spherical and widely inhabited) at its center."

Of course there are a few points of contention: why are wood and metal not included, for example? Is fire really an element of equal value? Isn't there a fifth element, a quinta essentia— ether, or crystal itself? We're going to ignore such questions here; there's no need to defend the Doctrine of the Four, or the Doctrine of Earth, Air, Water, and Fire. We're going to use it only as a means to an end, to attain a higher purpose. Making crystal is our only goal, and as soon as the crystal is made, the elements are no longer needed. After all, we don't question Wittgenstein about what his ladder is made of or how many rungs it has." (ibid.)

As part of this 'vita psychotica mystica' as he terms it, we begin with Earth: "In order to attain madness by earthly means, you must demolish structures, transgress limits, and pulverize earth. Earth is the element of vastness, stability, and distinctions." Then Air: "Motionless, we rise unnoticed through mists of crystal from planet Earth to a castle in the air." We move as the earth moves, and yet we are motionless watching the turning of that sphere from a height, fully aware that it is spinning away from us: "Then everything is reversed. A mirror version of the pyramid, an antipyramid, turns with its base toward the sky and its point touching the earth. This single point of concentration, on earth and in the air at the same time, becomes the contact point, the gate of emanation, the Plan Platform. A storm gathers, and the pyramid is blown around on its own axis. The pyramid starts spinning on its point; lateral lines and pyramid surfaces become indistinguishable. The pyramid becomes a cone, and in the wind

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the stone gyrates madly into thin air. The cone is like a top, a tornado, a swirling spiral." In the midst of this spiraling force of earth and air we emerge into that realm of the unknown: "Because of the invisibility and intangibility of the element of air, the tornado escapes from our grasp. We don't know if we're inside or outside the tornado, how spacious the eye is, or what there is to "see" there. We can enter the tornado only by moving through its wall. And whether we— as "we"— will survive such a move is unknown." In this abode you begin to know that which knows you:

"After the whirlpool, you find yourself among the deep-sea divers on dry land, the king's children without a kingdom, the illuminati by daylight. Which means you are related to those who preceded us in the night, who did not "rage against the dying of the light" 1 but against the lighting of the darkness. And you renew contact with "fellow sufferers," with seers and fools and those who don't really exist. You live in the miracle of two worlds in one, as Peter Kingsley says, "First, madness has to be experienced; then controlled. And to do this is to discover all kinds of sanities, of ways for operating skillfully in the world. ... To be controlled by insanity is to be feeble. To be controlled by sanity is to be even feebler. ... But when you have become so mad you are prepared to leave the purity of your madness behind, then the memory of it, preserved in every cell of your body, will stop you ever becoming contaminated by sanity. This is what it means to live in two worlds and not be limited by either.""

It's at this point you feel the fire rising all around you, a great conflagration of time and space, a journey into the void and abyss: "Twisting your way through axis and wheel, obsessing your way through fire, water, air, and earth, you end up somewhere else. The repetition snaps, a spark separates two moments and draws them together in the fire. There something appears that is both new and unheard of, an undreamt sunrise, an awakening from wakening. While Plotinus and Taylor hesitated and left us to our own devices, Kingsley will take us further into the fire. He concludes, "Then you arrive at something that's beyond any sort of repetition because it's completely still and timeless." Within time the spark burns outside time. You stare into the fire and focus on the firing of the fire. Past the fire, past the becoming of nothingness and the being of eternity, you see a four-spoked wheel in the fire, and it's melting." This Kusters tells us is the Crystal World:

"This is the sanctuary, the hearth of the life that continually incinerates itself, and again rejuvenates itself from the ash. This is the tireless fire, through whose clenching, as Heraclitus claimed, the cosmos was created. It is circulating within itself, continually repeating itself by moving backward and again forward as was shown in the visions of one of the prophets."

Madness, Mysticism, Philosophy - a triune path that is both therapeutic and part of an ancient paradigm updated? In Plato's Phaedrus, Socrates argues paradoxically that "our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness". The four kinds of divine inspiration, or madness, are viewed as a divine gift provided by the Muses, Dionysus, Apollo and Aphrodite (or Eros) respectively. In the same dialogue, the "divine banquet" is depicted as a metaphysical place of contemplation and vision. For Plato, the contemplation (theoria) of the eternal Ideas transcends our rational ability to comprehend and analyse these Ideas discursively. The desperate longing for this paradigmatic contemplation is imagined as a yearning for wings

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and the regained ability to fly to the divine banquet. Accordingly, this pressing desire is the desire for wholeness, for noetic integrity, and for one's true divine identity provided by dialectical searching, philosophical recollection and erotic madness. The hierarchically organized troops of gods are led by Zeus. They lack both jealousy and passion, being involved neither in plots, nor in heavenly wars:

The gods have no need for madness, let alone erotic madness; hence the gods are not philosophers. It is not surprising, then, that the gods seem to have no need for logos (let alone for rhetoric). Although there is a certain amount of noise in the heavens, there is no reference whatsoever to there being any discourse among the gods or between gods and men.7

Therefore, the Platonic philosopher, as the madman who nurtures wings, is the dialectically transformed "speaker" (the fallen soul encharmed by the magic of logos) whose apparently mad desire and erotike mania are not so much directly sent from the gods as sparkling from within as a desire for the divine banquet and for wisdom. But the three other kinds of madness discussed in Plato's Phaedrus, namely, poetic (poietike mania) telestic (telestike mania), and prophetic or mantic madness (mantike mania) indeed are sent by the gods.

The Muses are specified as the source of the poetic inspiration and of the three forms of madness; "the poetic sort seems to be the closest to Socratic-Platonic philosophizing and hence to be its most complex antagonist," as Charles Griswold remarks. (ibid.)

The telestic madness is anagogic, and leads the soul to its forgotten origins through the theurgic rites of ascent or other sacramental means of purification. The inspired telestic liturgies (telestike, hieratike telesiourgia, theophoria) are not necessarily to be regarded straightforwardly as "operations on the gods", thus deliberately and incorrectly equating the animated cul tic statues located in the context of particular ritual communications with the invisible metaphysical principles themselves. Otherwise, tacitly or not, the polemical premises for a certain iconoclastic bias are maintained. And so H.J. Blumenthal puts too much weight on the verb theourgein, supposing that one who docs theia erga is one who operates on the gods, thereby making theurgy a nonsense.8

The mantic inspiration, or prophetic madness, which allegedly produces countless benefits, is evoked and evidenced, first of all, by the prophetesses at Delphi, thus recalling the close connection between the Apollonian shrine at Delphi and the philosophical self-knowledge required by Plato's Socrates. According to Griswold, "Socratic prophecy seems to combine the human techne of division or dissection with the divinely given techne of madness; that is, it somewhat combines ... madness and sophrosyne." (Griswald, ibid.)

The point of this excursion is that madness and philosophy always were in touch with one another from the beginning. We've just erased this heritage and replaced it with the myth of Reason, Abstraction, and the Human Security Regime that Kant build against it following the Enlightenment. Even the early philosopher, Empedocles, was seen as a mortal god walking among men. For us this is madness, and yet as Algis

a prophet, as an inspired seer, somewhat emptied of himself and "filled with the god" (being a possessed entlzousi astes), is a representative of the speaking deity. Even if this

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There is a sense the Philosophy of Madness is also the Madness of the Philosophers, those who bear the messages from the gods or the abyss. The unknown as unknown and unknowable seems to impinge on our minds from somewhere that is nowhere and everywhere. The notion that madness is our destiny, that civilization, culture, and humanity are entering a time of chaos and re-imagining of its roots and future seem apparent as we watch the daily media. Will our philosophers once again take up the challenge of madness and retrieve the wisdom of the "gods" from that great Outside? Is this too illusion? Delusion? Madness?

One reason Wouter Kusters Philosophy of Madness might appeal to those who have undergone one of the various forms of psychotic break is that he, too, underwent it and came back from that strange world with a message. I know my own break began early on in in puberty or adolescence when my parents got divorced. The shock of this threw my mind into a realm of darkness that would haunt me for years. Later my experience of Viet Nam after being drafted and sent to those jungles. It was a living nightmare I still keep at bay. Returning from it I began questioning everything about my beliefs, my up-bringing, the world we live in. I began a long road into every counter-cultural praxis from Crowley's magick, drugs (LSD, uppers-downers, mescaline, mushrooms, etc.), the various New Age crazes, etc. till I discovered philosophy and the pre-Socratics along with literature of horror, decadence, and surrealist underworlds. These spoke to me of my own horrors of existence, gave me an understanding of what drove me into psychosis to begin with. And through it I found my own way out by pushing my self through it rather than denial I pursued the deeper extremities of my psychosis into those impersonal zones of utter chaos and madness and came out the other side. Changed forever.

The creature I am now is part of this ancient tribe of the mad and insane who learned one thing that old adage: "healer, heal thyself". I never entered a mental institution, although I came close many times. I somehow lived through almost sixteen years from age thirteen till I was in my late twenties tittering on the edge of not coming back. Many never do. Strangely I cannot put the cause of this reversal into normality on any one thing except that I pushed everything into its extreme, left no stone unturned in my pursuit of an answer, my own quest for as Wouter terms it 'infinity'. What I discovered for myself which ultimately brought me sanity is the simple nihil that there is no God, no absolute, no answer, no meaning. Existence just is. Either you accept this or you go mad seeking something that is and never will be there. It's just that simple. The nub is getting to that point and accepting it. Most never do. Most

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continue to wallow in their unacceptance of a world that is meaningless and seek to fill it with their mad thoughts, dreams, and unfounded delusions.

To be free is to accept the nothingness of existence. The emptiness that will never be filled. There is nothing to be revealed in existence, only that it is. We are just a part of an inexplicable and unfounded thing: the universe. There is no answer to it. There is no question. We alone question it, question ourselves, and unable to find an answer to our own inexplicable presence in this nothingness seek an answer to that strange disquieting question: "Is Life worth living?" It's a question that will never be resolved because it is already answered: we exist, we live. Asking "why" is what leads to all the sorrow and madness, because there is no one who can answer why we are here. No God. No Absolute of the philosophers. No jokester or Trickster behind the screen. No Wizard of Oz bumbling with the machinery of existence... nothing. Nada, Nada. Nada. But those who cannot accept this go mad, psychotic, insane. They want an answer for their misery, pain, and suffering. They curse the day they were born. They will not be assuaged. They blame this nothingness for being. They demand the impossible, and when it is not forthcoming they turn into that darkness from which there is no return, no respite.

As he says of his work: ""my book contains more formulas for going mad than for avoiding madness. It is aimed more at "psychotizing" thinkers and philosophers than at re-educating or psycho-educating the mad. It is not about a specter of madness but about the seduction of madness."

In ancient Greek Pythagorean traditions of which Plato was an inheritor and adept the notion that "the soul as a sort of fallen daimon, or as a Dionysian divine spark, is buried in a tomb-like material body, thus entering the cosmic cycle of elemental transformation. Hence, the soul is the pre-existing and immortal knowing subject. It passes through a number of incarnations in a cyclical pattern, and these bodily incarnations may be regarded as a sort of punishment, ordeal, or simply viewed as a result of forgetfulness, ignorance and play." (Uzdavinys, p. 57) Much like the Indic Buddhistic traditions the point of this exercise is "the ultimate aim of the soul is freedom from the wheel of terrestrial punishment following the soteriological formula bios-thanatos-bios (life-death-life), which shows the way of entering the eternal and noetic "day" of Ra or Helios. This freedom implies the restoration of one's initial divine identity. The deliverance (lusis) is performed by Dionysus Bakchios through specific cathartic rituals; and Persephone must decide whether those purified souls that have paid the penalty for their wrongful deeds may be sent to the "seats of the blessed" (hedras ei.s euhageon). The soul's ultimate goal is its final liberation from the painful cycle of reincarnation, thus arriving "at the victor's crown with swift feet" and ending as god instead of mortal." (Uzdavinys, p. 58)

If you are such as I who believes there is no such transcendence, then what is left? Even the Greeks elaborate mythologies incorporating much of the wisdom of the East into their own ways and praxis seems utter madness to us who have accepted the modern secular atheistic traditions. So, what for us, remains? Is there a secular gnosis, a way of the knower that changes the knower, and yet allows her to be a part of a darker worldview that does not seek some transcension of the elemental earth, air, water, and fire conflagrations and apocalypse? It's this that Thomas Ligotti would strive to know and understand in his own quest, so it is to him I'll return...

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